

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An easily dispersible cake of precipitated silica, silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet, produced by the process of claim 3.

~~wherein the precipitated silica has a BET specific surface area of at least 220 m²/g, and~~

~~wherein when ion-exchange water is added to the easily dispersible cake to provide an aqueous dispersion of the silica with a concentration of 5% by weight, said dispersion being stirred with a propeller mixer to affect a preliminary dispersion, a resultant slurry being treated to be dispersed with a high-pressure homogenizer once at a processing pressure of 78 MPa, and further being diluted to reduce the silica concentration to 1.5% by weight, a resultant dispersion has a light-scattering index (n-value) of at least 2.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The easily dispersible cake of precipitated silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 1, having a water content within a range of 83-93% by weight.

3. (Currently Amended) A process for producing ~~the~~ an easily dispersible cake of precipitated silica ~~according to Claim 1~~ silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet,

wherein the precipitated silica has a BET specific surface area of at least 220 m²/g, and

wherein when ion-exchange water is added to the easily dispersible cake to provide an aqueous dispersion of the silica with a concentration of 5% by weight, said dispersion being stirred with a propeller mixer to affect a preliminary dispersion, a resultant slurry being treated to be dispersed with a high-pressure homogenizer once at a processing pressure of 78 MPa, and further being diluted to reduce the silica concentration to 1.5% by weight, a resultant dispersion has a light-scattering index (n-value) of at least 2,

_____ said process comprising using a liquid selected from the group consisting of aqueous alkali silicate solution, alkaline aqueous solution of which pH is adjusted with a basic substance, and water as an initial reaction liquid, wherein said initial reaction liquid is free of an electrolyte and a mineral acid, simultaneously adding an alkali silicate and a mineral acid to the reaction

liquid of which pH is being maintained at a fixed value, variation width being ± 0.3 , within a range of 7.5-11.5, and of which temperature is being maintained at 92-98°C, so as to form precipitated silica, wherein a concentration of solid silica at the end of the reaction is not higher than 50 g/L; and separating said precipitated silica from said reaction liquid in a wet state, so as to obtain said easily dispersible cake of precipitated silica.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) A dispersion of precipitated silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet comprising a dispersion of the easily dispersible cake of precipitated silica according to Claim 1 in a polar solvent, wherein an average particle size of precipitated silica particles present in the dispersion is not greater than 300 nm, and a ratio of aggregated particles having a particle size equal to or more than 500 nm is not higher than 5% by volume.

6. (Currently Amended) The dispersion of precipitated silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 5, further comprising a cationic polymer.

7. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing the dispersion of precipitated silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 5, comprising subjecting a silica slurry, formed by dispersing the cake of precipitated silica in the polar solvent, to a fine pulverization treatment with a high-pressure homogenizer.

8. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing the dispersion of precipitated silica for making a coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 6, comprising subjecting a liquid premixture, formed by dispersing the cake of precipitated silica and the cationic polymer in the polar solvent, to a fine pulverization treatment with a high-pressure homogenizer.

9. (Previously Presented) A coating liquid for an ink-jet recording sheet, which is obtained by dispersing the easily dispersible cake of precipitated silica according to Claim 1 and a binder in a polar solvent,

wherein a percent transmission of the coating liquid, as measured after diluting the same to the silica concentration of 1.5% by weight, is at least 20%.

10. (Previously Presented) The coating liquid for the ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 9, further comprising a cationic polymer.

11. (Previously Presented) A process for making the coating liquid for the ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 9, comprising dispersing the cake of precipitated silica and the binder in the polar solvent.

12. (Previously Presented) A process for making the coating liquid for the ink-jet recording sheet according to Claim 10, comprising dispersing the cake of precipitated silica, the cationic polymer and the binder in the polar solvent.